

HUMPED GORGET FOUND IN DARKE COUNTY

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Humped gorgets are rare artifacts which probably date to the Glacial Kame culture of 4,000 years before present. Their distribution in Ohio lies mainly in the northwestern and west-central part of the state.

The example made of banded slate shown in Figures 1, 2, and 3 was found in a soybean field in Adams Township, Darke County, by Charles Hall in 2000. It was on a knoll fifty yards from Bolton Run, a tributary of Greenville Creek. The artifact, drilled from the bottom, measures 2³/₄ inches long, 1³/₄ inches wide.

Many humped gorgets are made of banded slate, but raw materials also include dense black slate, quartzite, and siltstone. Most are drilled only from the lower surface; some are drilled from both top and bottom surfaces, and still others, though obviously finished artifacts, remain undrilled. The bottom can be flat, slightly grooved, or concave.

For a number of good reasons, humped gorgets, even with their great range of variations, can be interpreted as stylized representations of turtles. The artifacts appear asymmetrical — they are often widest and highest beyond the center line, similar to the shape of a turtle carapace; they usually have a narrow trailing edge which suggests a tail; the raised ridge or “hump” infers the scutes present on the carapace of some species of turtles; some, when viewed from the side on a flat surface, exhibit “head” and “tail” ends which do not lie flat, but rise slightly; on others, such as shown in Figures 1 and 4, the head is suggested; and the examples shown in Figures 4 and 5, which clearly portray turtles, may serve as Rosetta Stones in the understanding of humped gorgets (Holzapfel 1999, 2006).

The turtles depicted appear to be map turtles (Ernst, Lovich, and Barbour 1994) and it is not understood why this spe-

cies was selected as an emblem for certain Glacial Kame people. Map turtles are not large, vicious, beautiful, or industrious. They are not mighty hunters — they feed on dead fish, mollusks and insects. Humped gorgets remain one of the mysteries of archaeology.

References Cited

Ernst, Carl H., Lovich, and Barbour
1994 *Turtles of the United States and Canada*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington.

Holzapfel, Elaine
1999 An Effigy Humped Gorget from Darke County, Ohio. *Ohio Archaeologist* 49(3):12, 13.

2006 Do Some Glacial Kame Gorgets Represent Turtles? *Ohio Archaeologist* 56(4):20-23



Figure 1 (Holzapfel)
Humped gorget found by Charles Hall in Darke County. Front of “turtle” faces left. Note similarity of “head” shape with Figure 4. The raised ridge on the top suggests turtle scutes as shown in Figures 4 and 5. The worn condition of this artifact may reflect handling by many generations of Glacial Kame people.



Figure 2 (Holzapfel)
Top of gorget in Figure 1. Wider end at left implies front, narrower end at right implies tail.



Figure 4 (Holzapfel)
About 2/3 of a gorget from Marion County, Ohio.



Figure 3 (Holzapfel)
Bottom of gorget in Figure 1 shows drilling from bottom. Wider end at left, narrower end at right.



Figure 5 (Holzapfel)
Humped gorget found in Darke County by Virgil Troutwine.